

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-11 OMB-01

/071 W

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R 201835Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8285

INFO SECDEF

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 00956

DEFENSE FOR ISA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, UK

SUBJECT: THATCHER SPEAKS OUT ON DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AF-

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FAIRS

REF: LONDON 822

SUMMARY: CONSERVATIVE LEADER MARGARET THATCHER EMBARKED SOMEWHAT TENTATIVELY ON NEW ROLE AS PARTY SPOKESMAN ON DEFENSE AND FMREIGN AFFAIRS IN KENSINGTON SPEECH JANUARY 19. HER ADDREQS CONFIRMED EARLIER INDICATION IN HER SHADOW CABINET RE-SHUFFLE THAT CONSERVATIVES WILL ATTACK DEFENSE POLICIES OF LABOR GOVERNMENT MORE AGGRESSIVELY IN THE FUTURE. SHE EMPHASIZED SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS OF CUTTING DEFENSE BUDGET IN VIEW OF GROWING SOVIET MILITARY AND NAVAL STRENGTH. END SUMMARY.

1. MARGARET THATCHER, LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY, FOLLOWED UP HER ANNOUNCEMENT OF CHANGES IN HER SHADOW CABINET (REFTEL-NOTAL) WITH A SPEECH TO CONSERVATIVE DELEGATES OF FOUR WEST LONDON CONSTITUENCIES JANUARY 19. HER SPEECH WAS ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY AN ATTACK ON THE DEFENSE POLICIES OF LABOR GOVERNMENT WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE THREAT POSED BY INCREASING SOVIET MILITARY AND NAVAL POWER.

2. MRS. THATCHER MADE REFERENCE TWICE TO HER EARLIER CAUTIONARY REMARKS ON DETENTE DELIVERED SHORTLY BEFORE THE HELSINKI AONFERENCE. SHE ALSO NOTED SHE WOULD BE VISITING BRITISH FORCES IN GERMANY LATER THIS WEEK AND HER REMARKS WERE OBVIOUSLY INTENDED TO PROVIDE BASE FOR THAT VISIT.

3. THERE WAS LITTLE NEW IN HER PRESENTATION OF THE CURRENT DEFENSE POSITION OF GREAT BRITAIN. SHE EMPHASIZED THE SOVIET INVESTMENT IN MILITARY EQUIPMENT, RESEARCH, AND DEVELOPMELT CONTRASTED WITH THE STEADY DECLINE OF BRITISH INVESTMENT IN ITS OWN DEFENSE.

4. WITH REGAPD TO THE SOVIET UNION'S POLICIES, SHE CITED PARTICULARLY QOVIET EFFORTS IN ANGOLA IN SUPPORT OF ITS ALLY, THE MPLA, WHICH, SHE SAID, CONSTITUTED A REAL THREAT TO BRITAIN BECAUSE OF ANGOLA'S STRATEGIC POSITION AND THE IMPORTANCE A COMMUNIST VICTORY IN ANGOLA WOULD HAVE ON OTHER AFRICAN PROBLEMS (SETTLEMENT OF RHODESIAN
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PROBLEM AND ESTABLISHING AN UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN SOUTH AND BLACK AFRICA). ANGOLA, SHE SAID, DEMONSTRATES WHAT THE SOVIETS REALLY MEAN BY DETENTE.

5. MRS. THATCHER EMPHASIZED BRITAIN'S RELIANCE UPON THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE AND ON NATO. IN REGARD TO THE LATTER, THE LABOR GOVERNMENT'S POLICY OF CUTTING DEFENSE EXPENDITURES CALLED INTO QUESTION BRITAIN'S SUPPORT OF NATO.

6. COMMENT: MRS. THATCHER WAS GIVING NOTICE IN HER SPEECH OF THE INTENTION OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY TO ATTACK THE GOVERNMENT ON ITS DEFENSE POLICIES, PARTICULARLY WITH THE FURTHER CUTS FORECAST IN THE UPCOMING DEFENSE DEBATE. THIS CONFIRMS THE MOVE SIGNED BY CHANGES IN HER SHADOW CABINET (REFTEL) WITH IAN GILMOUR A MUCH HARDER HITTING DEFENSE SPOKESMAN THAN GEORGE YOUNGER.

7. THE SPEECH, HOWEVER, HAD AN UNUSUAL QUALITY IN ITS TENTATIVE APPROACH. THIS IS ONE OF THE FIRST TIMES MRS. THATCHER HAS SPOKEN ON DEFENSE AND HER STYLE OF DELIVERY WAS CONSIDERABLY LESS PUGNACIOUS THAN IT ORDINARILY IS IN PUBLIC MEETINGS BEFORE THE PARTY FAITHFUL. SHE STUCK

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 00956

RATHER RIGIDLY TO HER RELEASED TEXT, MAKING ONLY A FEW
INSERTIONS. SHE SEEMED SOMEWHAT UNFAMILIAR WITH THE SUB-
JECT MATTER OF HER TALK, ALTHOUGH HER AUDIENCE RESPONDED
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WELL AND APPLAUDED APPROPRIATELY.

8. IT WAS SURPRISING THAT SHE SPOKE WITHOUT REFERENCE TO
HER RECENT TRIP TO THE MIDDLE EAST, RESTRICTING HER
FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMENTS TO THOSE RELATED TO DEFENSE.
PRESS COMMENT JANUARY 20 SUGGESTED THE SPEECH WAS HER RE-
SPONSE TO A CRITICISM BY CONSERVATIVE MP JULIAN CRITCHLEY
JANUARY 17 THAT THE PARTY WAS LARGELY SILENT ON DEFENSE
AND FOREIGN POLICY; HOWEVER, HER OFFICE CONFIRMED TO THE
EMBASSY LAST WEEK THE TOPIC AND THEME OF HER TALK IN AD-
VANCE OF CRITCHLEY'S CRITICISM.

9. THE REAL MARGARET THATCHER CAME THROUGH IN A FEW IN-
FORMAL REMARKS EXPRESSED AFTER AN APPRECIATION OFFERED BY
ONE OF THE PARTY FUNCTIONARIES. SHE NOTED THAT SHE HAD
CHOSEN TO SPEAK ON DEFENSE RATHER THAN ON ECONOMICS BE-
CAUSE OF ITS IMPORTANCE. THE TWO THEMES, SHE SAID, WERE
CLOSELY RELATED, AND THE LABOR GOVERNMENT'S POOR PERFOR-
MANCE IN THE ECONOMIC AREA DOOMED ITS DEFENSE POLICIES IN
ADVANCE.

10. ALTHOUGH HER SPEECH HAD THE TENTATIVE QUALITY OF A
MAIDEN SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT, MRS. THATCHER SEEMED TO BE
SETTING HERSELF UP AS A TWENTIETH CENTURY BOADICEA,
RALLYING THE TROOPS TO REPEL THE ENEMY. THE TROOPS LIKED
IT. END COMMENT.

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